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**a  
park  
recreation  
and  
open space  
study**

**for  
the  
billings  
montana  
urban  
area**

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Prepared by  
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*“Moreover he hath left you all his walks,  
His private arbors, and new-planted orchards  
On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,  
And to your heirs forever, common pleasures  
To walk abroad and recreate yourselves”*

*Shakespear, Marc Anthony's Oration in  
Julius Ceasar, Act III, scene 2*

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Prepared for  
The City of Billings  
Yellowstone County  
City-County Planning Board

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"Finding open space is a matter of how badly you want it. When the city wants it to put an expressway through, there's no problem. They create the space by eminent domain. But Parks? Well, now, that's something else again."

—Halloway Sells, Director of  
Settlement Houses in Cincinnati

# INTRODUCTION

Adequate parks and open space are the most important elements in creating or preserving a pleasant, attractive, and livable environment of any community. Billings, perhaps more than any other community in the Intermountain West or Midland Empire, is blessed with a natural setting that sets it apart from other communities as a desirable place to live. Nestled between the magnificent Rimrocks and the clear flowing Yellowstone River in the very shadows of the Beartooth and Pryor Mountains, Billings has more than its share of God-given natural environment.

Not unlike other communities, however, Billings for the most part has ignored both the river and the Rims, which are the most important of her natural resources and contribute most to the natural environment. The Rims for a large part are in private ownership, and it is difficult to find access to the river because of posted or fenced land. This is not to imply that there is not some concern to preserve the quality of Billings' environment. This report in itself reflects the concern of some who seek means by which not only to preserve Billings natural resources and environment, but to develop them and make them available to all the citizens.

If Billings fails to act on the recommendations of this report, the community shall fail in its responsibility to its citizens. More than enough good land is available for urban development to satisfy the most optimistic growth estimates. The community can easily afford to preserve open space when needed. However, because Billings today has no comprehensive open space plan or policy for preservation of these lands, nor any vehicle for carrying them out, there is no way to assure that urban development will be kept away from land which should remain open.

Land which should be kept as open space is being developed without any consideration to the additional public costs which will result in the future because of flood damage, flood control projects, or pollution of water. Prime potential park area along the Yellowstone River is preempted for private purposes rather than public use. Residential subdivisions are planned with virtually all of the open space parceled equally on each lot, rather than concentrating the open space together, making it a more enjoyable development, useful, and less work.

The first consequence of failing to manage our natural resources would be the loss of a prime asset in competing for business and industry. A pleasing and healthful environment in Billings can add immeasurably to the appeal of this area as against other areas in the nation which do not possess these assets. All too frequently, short-term economic interests appear to be getting the upper hand. A developer may reap the profit from being located along a valuable drainage, on the river or atop the Rims, but this inevitably rules out the possibility of taking advantage or preserving these natural resources for the entire community.

The second consequence will be the adverse effect on the people who live in Billings. The possibility of preserving natural beauty and resources for public enjoyment will have been lost. Shorelines which could be distributed between private use and public open space will be entirely private. Flood plains will not be protected. Recreation areas will be rare.

The third consequence will be wholesale destruction of our most prized natural resource, our natural beauty. Unrestricted development along our river and drainages will only contribute to their pollution. Should our generation be allowed to use up this natural resource, and leave nothing for the future?

Civic leaders in Billings over the years, working within limited finances, have been able to make some progress. This is evidenced through dedication of lands for parks, but these efforts will not be sufficient for a truly metropolitan Billings in the year 1985 and 2000.. Parks alone, such as Billings has today, though an integral part of the picture, are not the only type of open space needed to preserve the natural resources and environment of Billings.

The longer the community waits, the more expensive it will become. Many opportunities available ten years ago have disappeared today. Today's opportunities will not be here ten years hence, unless action is taken. Let not our children question why we allowed our river to be polluted, our rims desecrated, our natural environment and open spaces disappear. Let them rather grow up and inherit the Billings left us, and say of our generation—"They Cared."

*"Grandiose plans for creating new cities, assume old cities are lost and ignore the fact that people continue to show marked preference for them."*

from THE LAST LANDSCAPE  
by William H. Whyte



## SCOPE OF REPORT

This study is specially directed to a consideration of the park and open space resources and requirements of the city/county planning area or, as we refer to it, the urban area. It must function, therefore, as a critical component of the comprehensive plan for the Billings Urban Area. Consideration has been given to the broad range of data from studies completed to date as a basis for this study. To provide greater compatibility with the comprehensive plan, the report is divided into four sections: FINDINGS, GOALS, STANDARDS, and RECOMMENDATIONS. Further breakdown of each section is along functional lines particularly adapted to the specific subject of the report.

It should be emphasized that this report constitutes a statement of where Billings stands today in terms of park and open space resources and needs, supplemented by general recommendations for expansion and development of these resources. It is intended to serve only as a basis for detailed planning in relation to a changing and developing community situation. It does not in any way eliminate the need for specialized and detailed planning for individual open spaces and parks, neighborhoods and subdivisions.

The report has endeavored to consider a number of subtle factors not easily reduced to statistical media. It is believed these factors have an impact upon parks and open space lands in the particular context of Billings' resources and its population. This might seem to make the study the less objective. This is not the case. Park planning must be as much an exercise in human relations as it is a component in effective management. In both these roles, it must sometimes transcend the precision of statistical media and accounting criteria.

## I. FINDINGS

### A. HISTORY

The park movement in Billings began, in substance, with the donation of North and South Parks to the City by the Minnesota and Montana Land Improvement Company in 1903. A few years later, in 1911, the City organized its first park board. The City expanded its park holdings with Highland Park in 1914 and Pioneer Park in 1920.

Intensive development for active recreation use began in 1913, with the South Park swimming pool, soon followed by a wading pool and tennis courts. Physical development activity continued through the 1920's. Development of Pioneer Park was the City's first venture in professional park planning in 1921, when the City hired Mrs. Gray, a Landscape Architect, to design the Park's development. The matured Park today stands as the outstanding single unit of the City Park System. Its level of use is evidence that a well-planned and physically attractive park will draw many users from areas served by less attractive parks of equal or greater acreage.

For reasons none too clear, the community did not take significant advantage of the extensive federal programs of the 1930's to expand and develop its park holdings. This fact, coupled with the rapid post-war population growth, led to a relative shortage of developed parklands by the early 1950's. Since that time, appreciable additions to the system have accrued through purchases by the Planning Board (over 137 acres), action of interested citizens and service organizations. Yellowstone County acquired parklands during this period through park dedication laws, individual donations, and direct purchase.

Development activity has not kept up with acquisition, and today only about half of the city park holdings are developed, and virtually none of the county parks have more than the most temporary sort of development.

The history of park development and management on both the city and county levels clearly shows that controlling legislation, and the organization of managing entities, has not kept pace with growth and change of the urban area. Perhaps this deficit in governmental structure is even more serious than the deficits of land and capital improvements.

## B. INVENTORY

The City of Billings presently contains about 581 acres of park and open space lands, of which 231.8 acres are undeveloped. (The entire planning area contains some 960 acres of park and open space lands.) The low level of developed parklands has led to a high demand and use on a few acres resulting in an erosion of both facilities and the natural environment at several of the parks.

The following table summarizes all existing parks and acreages in the Billings Urban Area. A complete inventory with specific facilities appears in Appendix A of this report. To avoid duplication and repetition, commentaries on parks and facilities are contained in the recommendations for specific parks.

### CITY-COUNTY PARK ACERAGE DEVEL. & UNDEVEL.

TYPE OF PARK	CITY		COUNTY		TOTAL
	DEVELOPED		UNDEVELOPED		
Regional & Open Space	166.40		191.27		553.24
	35.30		160.27		
Community	138.79				209.79
	11.82		59.18		
Neighborhood	44.97		40.50		196.21
			110.71		
Total per item	350.16		231.80		959.24
	47.12		330.16		
Aggregate		581.96*		*6.4% of total city area	
		377.28*			

## C. USER SURVEY

As a part of this study, a user survey was conducted to determine use of existing Community Parks. The researchers sought to determine what percentage of park use was from outside the city limits, and if certain parks were subjected to higher outside use than others. The type of facilities within the various parks vary considerably; however, the tabulations on the next page have been broken into typical categories for comparison purposes.

In an analysis of the survey it was found that:

1. Approximately 75 per cent of the total number of persons surveyed were city residents. However, in North and South Park the city resident total dropped to 45 and 64.
2. County resident users comprised 13.7 per cent of the total number of persons surveyed. However, this total rose to approximately 25 per cent in North and South Parks, but fell to four per cent in Veterans and Rose Parks. This can be directly correlated to population densities outside the city limits.
3. Certain facilities are subjected to higher use by county residents, such as picnic areas, play-pools, and general use. Tennis courts, recreation classes, and swimming pools do not seem to generate as much outside pressure.

While the heaviest user origin in a community park generally comes from within two and one-half miles, the scope of facilities can influence user concentration. For instance, many people picnic in South Park because of the swimming pool, which neither Pioneer or North Parks have. Yet, North Park which is rather deficient

in recreation facilities gets a heavy use from the south side. The reason given for such migration to North Park by most of the people was the overcrowding in South Park. By the same token, Veterans Park gets a fair west end use because of the lack of a similar park in the west end.

Just as the facilities influence user concentration within the City, the complete lack of facilities in the urbanized areas east and south of Billings tends to put a heavy outside use on certain city facilities. North and South Park, closest to the urbanized areas, receive the heaviest county use.

## USER SURVEY TABULATION

Park Activity	CITY		COUNTY		OTHER		County/Other	TOTAL
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	%	
<b>PIONEER PARK</b>								
Picnic	2110	81.7	305	11.9	165	6.4	(18.3)	2580
Play-Pool	594	80.6	59	8.0	84	11.4	(19.4)	737
Tennis	392	97.2	11	2.8			( 2.8)	403
General	40	94.0	2	4.6	1	2.4	( 6.0)	43
	3136	83.4	377	10.1	250	6.6	(16.7)	3763
<b>NORTH PARK</b>								
Picnic	800	50.4	321	22.0	250	27.6	( 9.6)	1571
Play-Pool	185	39.6	146	31.3	136	29.2	(60.5)	467
Softball	250	55.4	89	19.7	113	25.0	(44.7)	452
General	197	42.1	156	33.4	119	24.5	(57.9)	472
	1432	45.0	712	24.1	818	27.6	(51.7)	2962
<b>SOUTH PARK</b>								
Swim	858	66.7	348	26.7	98	7.6	(34.3)	1304
Picnic	2218	54.1	109	27.7	74	18.2	(45.9)	401
Play-Pool	42	66.7	15	23.8	6	9.5	(33.3)	63
Tennis	61	92.3	3	4.5	2	3.2	( 7.7)	66
General	103	68.6	25	16.7	22	14.7	(31.4)	150
	1282	64.6	500	25.2	202	10.2	(35.4)	1984
<b>ROSE PARK</b>								
Swim	2368	92.5	110	4.3	78	3.2	( 7.5)	2556
Tennis	50	96.2	2	3.8	0		( 3.8)	52
General	99	99.0	0		1	1.0	( 1.0)	100
	2517	92.9	112	4.2	79	2.9	( 7.1)	2708
<b>ATHLETIC PARK</b>								
Swim	1633	86.6	185	9.9	65	3.5	(13.4)	1883
<b>VETERANS PARK</b>								
	230	90.6	14	5.5	10	3.9	( 9.4)	254
	209	91.6	6	2.7	13	5.7	(10.4)	228
	439	91.1	20	4.1	23	4.8	( 8.9)	582
<b>TOTALS</b>	10439	75+%	1906	13.7%	1437	10.7%	(24%)	13882

Based on the survey, the following can be stated:

1. The urbanized areas of Billings Heights, Lockwood, and the south side are evidently desirous of park and recreation facilities. The population of these areas, non-city residents, are now placing a heavy load upon certain facilities in North and South Parks.
2. If adequate facilities are provided in one park, people will bypass inadequate features closer to home. For instance, many people living in the west end go to Pioneer or Veterans because of inadequate facilities at Rose Park.

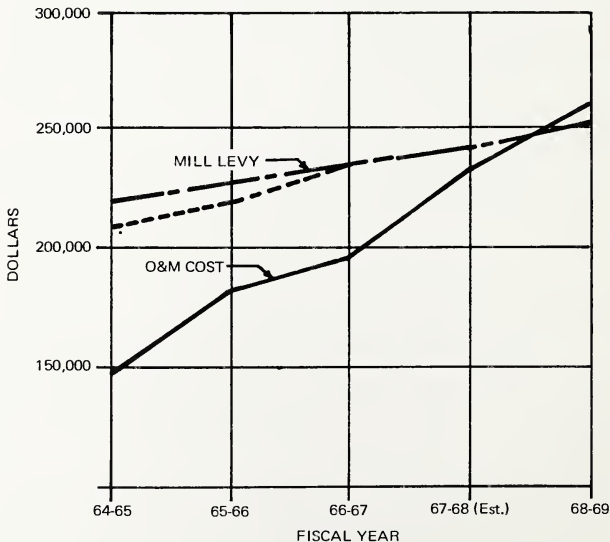
3. Some pressure on North and South Parks has lessened now that the Interstate is open to tourists.
4. Some county park development is required now with emphasis on playground equipment, wading pools, picnic areas, and athletic fields. These are the types of facilities now receiving the heaviest county use, and therefore, those which should be provided in the first phase of county park development. Facilities such as tennis, swimming pools, and recreation buildings, the most costly elements of park developments, which undoubtedly generate use when constructed, should be programmed for second phase construction.

#### D. ADMINISTRATION

The State imposes ceilings on the taxation by local units of government. While we recognize that these ceilings were perhaps practical in an era of simply structured, rural-oriented communities, we do not feel that they are practical in a state which presents so much diversity of character, growth-rates, and resources as occur in Montana's major communities today. The specific ceiling on the mill levy for park purposes constitutes a limitation that prevents many towns from developing an adequate budget to catch up and keep up with their expanding park and recreation needs. Billings is certainly one such community. The chart below shows how the increasing costs of operation and maintenance will surpass revenues by this next fiscal year unless some relief is found. The result will be no monies for capital improvement.

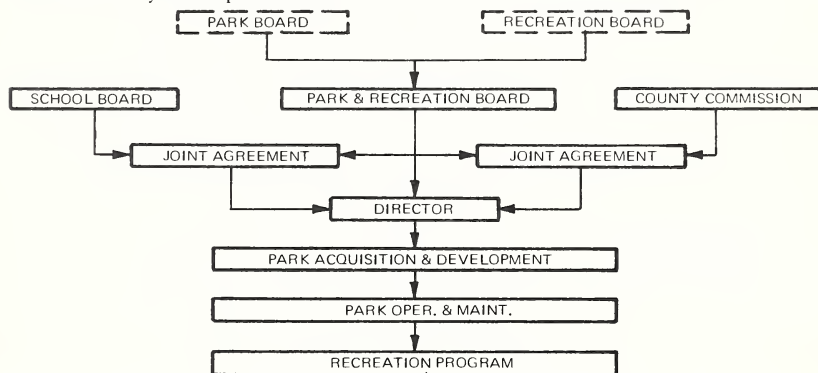
**O & M COST — MILL LEVY COMPARISON**

FISCAL YR	O & M COST	CAPITAL OUTLAY	TOTAL	MILL LEVY
64-65	\$149,980.67	\$167,675.11	\$317,656.11	\$207,378.12
65-66	179,878.02	51,936.66	231,814.68	219,558.00
66-67	197,002.70	129,556.48	326,559.18	236,078.40
67-68	237,546.14	79,747.61	307,293.75	244,588.80



The Park Board and Recreation Commission inevitably overlap in their management of what is basically a single resource, the park and open space lands of the community. These boards and commissions also overlap, to some degree, the policy-making functions of the City Council. By the same token, there are gaps in the relationships, and in particular the ability of the boards and commissions to effectively cooperate with the county's government in the form of the county commissioners. The board or commission may be an effective device for the evolution of policy, but it is not an effective unit for line management of the administrative tasks of local government.

At the present, the Recreation and Park Departments are completely separate entities, each responsible to its own board. The Park Department manages the physical resource and all recreation facilities therein. The Recreation Department handle arrangements for the many groups who use park recreation facilities. The Recreation Department conducts organized recreation programs in the parks during the summer. With the best of personnel selection, it is impossible to achieve optimum management of all the resources or the activities when they are so separated.



The chart above reflects one accepted type of organization by other cities which would effect more efficient management of the Billings park system.

## E. PRIVATE RECREATION

The private sector is, each year, providing more opportunities for active recreation pursuits from water skiing on Lake Elmo to cycle hill climbing south of the river, including winter sledding south of the city on the Blue Creek road. Such activities will increase, but the private sector cannot be expected to provide the type of recreation usually associated with parks. A few of the major areas of recreation activity provided by the private sector are as follows:

Three full-scale golf course developments apparently meet the present need for facilities for this type activity. These are:

The Hilands Golf Club, oldest and most accessible to the center of population at present, is located on high value land, and it may be to their advantage to relocate on the periphery of the urban area as land values escalate. If it does move, it should probably consider a peripheral southwestern location.

The Yellowstone Country Club, at the northwest fringe of settlement in the urban area, presents a choice tract, well developed, which will preserve attractive open space, as well as serve the affluent community developing in its quarter of town.

The Lake Hills Golf Club, located adjacent the growing northeast wing of the urban area, will meet the needs of that segment of town for the foreseeable future.

Three major facilities for shooters provide an important recreational opportunity for many persons. These are:

The Billings Rod and Gun Club is the largest of these. Located north of the urban area, it offers pistol ranges, rifle ranges to 1,000 yards, and an archery range. Complete trap and skeet facilities are included in its long-range plan.

The Yellowstone Rifle and Pistol Club, located to the northwest of the urban area, offers pistol ranges, rifle ranges to 1,000 yards, along with benchrest competition facilities.

The Billings Trap Club at Lake Elmo provides complete shotgunning facilities for practice and competition.

The Billings Saddle Club provides an excellent organized activity program and facilities for its members. The evident popularity of riding as an individual and family activity, and the high incidence of horse ownership would lend additional support to proposals for suitable bridle paths with safe street crossings. It may be worthy also of special zoning consideration as the city limits extend into the peripheral area.

It is hoped that the private sector would work with and cooperate in development of active recreation facilities with the city and county to assure lack of duplication and maintenance of the highest development standards. It is not entirely unreasonable to assume that private enterprise could some day lease public lands to provide a particular facility such as par three golf, etc. Oftentimes a recreation development is economically feasible because of demand, but land is not available or too costly. Each case would have to be very carefully studied to determine if such action would be in the best interest of the entire community and consistent with good planning, quality, and use of the land.

## **II. GOALS**

### **A. GENERAL**

As set forth earlier, it is intended that this report serve as a basis for detailed planning of an adequate park and open space program for Billings. The most important step in any planning program is to first establish some goals. In other words, what will be the approach in future years to providing the open space and park needs for an urban Billings? The goals, as set forth below, should serve not only to express the aims for tomorrow, but a basis upon which all future administrations can enact programs and regulations.

### **B. SPECIFIC**

A park and recreation system that includes a sufficient diversity of areas and facilities to serve effectively a population with varied characteristics, needs and interest.

Accessibility to recreational areas without destruction of the unique character and quality of such areas.

Minimization of incompatible uses bordering parks and recreational areas.

Identification and preservation of landmarks and areas of historical significance.

Encouragement for the preservation of natural features and amenities and the conservation of natural resources for the benefit of the community. The aesthetic, social, and cultural values of the Billings area are its assets, and should be protected and preserved.

Cooperation between the various governmental agencies in Billings is encouraged in order to insure that adequate park and open space land and facilities will be provided.

Encouragement of a unified and continuing system of parks and open spaces providing the highest degree of happiness, health, safety, efficiency, and well-being of the entire Billings community.

Facility and land areas should be scaled to meet the needs of the area served, both present and future.



Encouragement should be given to linking the local topography in park and open space system so as to preserve the community's water resources, prevent flooding, and avoid drainage problems.

Acquisition of lands in advance of development in order to avoid higher acquisition costs in the future.

Coordination of park and recreational programs with all federal, state, county, and local agencies were possible. Facilities should be combined with school facilities where possible.

Preservation and protection of the tops of the Rims for use of scenic vistas, parks, and bridle trail systems.

Preservation of the lowlands, natural waterways, and marshes associated with the Yellowstone River and its local tributaries in their natural state so as to insure their continuance as a wild and natural area.

Availability to the Yellowstone River and area to the public.

# III. STANDARDS

## A. GENERAL

Standards for the development of parks and recreation areas, like goals, are intended to serve as a means to formulate plans for the development of a system that will serve all segments of the Billings Urban Area and its citizens.

As has been mentioned, planning a park, recreation, and open space system for a community must transcend statistical media. Statistics, such as the standards set forth in this section, are meant only as guides. We like to consider these "Standards" as guidelines because they cannot be uniformly applied to each and every area. Each area must be considered in its own context, taking into consideration such things as topography, size, access, relationship to other areas, character of the neighborhood, environment, etc. There are no two parks, or park situations, alike any more than there are any two people alike, and people are who use parks.

The "Standards" are broken into two categories — area requirements and facility requirements. These "Standards" are, in our judgment, reasonable for the Billings Urban Area. As will be covered under specific recommendations, Billings' situation and population characteristics are unique unto themselves, and cannot be arbitrarily classified with the average community throughout the nation. The community must start somewhere, however, so these standards are based on various recommendations of several organizations for communities the size of Billings, including the National Recreation and Park Association. All park, recreation areas, and open spaces fall into the following general classifications:

STANDARDS*	
Playlots	1 acre per 1,000 population**
Neighborhood Park	2.5 acres per 1,000 population
Community Park	2.5 acres per 1,000 population
Regional Parks	5.0 acres per 1,000 population
Total Standard	10 acres per 1,000 population

\*In larger cities of higher density, some planners feel that 20 acres per 1,000 population is a better standard. The relative size of the Billings Urban Area and availability of open country, rivers, and forest land does not call for this higher standard.

\*\*Not counted in total because of its special and limited use — see B-1.

Based on these "Standards" the total acreages of existing parklands for the entire urban area appears adequate. A study of the following chart, however, shows areas of imbalance and the need for development.

### RELATIONSHIP TO RECOMMENDED STANDARDS

#### City (pop 61,655\*\*)

	Std. Acres 1000 pop.	Reg'd	Existing*	(Developed)	(Undeveloped)
Regional	5 acres	308.28	199.64	( 9.37)	(191.27)
Community	2.5 acres	154.14	138.79	(138.79)	
Neighborhood	2.5 acres	154.14	85.50	( 44.97)	( 40.53)
TOTAL		616.56	423.93	(193.13)	(231.80)

#### County (pop 11,196\*\*)

Regional	5.0	55.98	160.27		(160.27)
Community	2.5	27.99	71.00	( 11.82)	( 59.18)
Neighborhood	2.5	27.99	110.71		(110.71)
TOTAL		111.96	341.98	( 11.82)	(330.16)

#### Urban Area (pop 72,851\*\*)

Regional	5.0	364.26	360.91	( 9.37)	(351.54)
Community	2.5	182.13	209.79	(150.61)	( 59.18)
Neighborhood	2.5	182.13	196.21	( 44.97)	(151.24)
TOTAL		728.52	766.91	(204.95)	(561.96)

\*See inventory in Appendix A.

\*\*Used 1965 population from Economic and Population study as prepared by Harstad Associates. These were the latest population figures available.



It should be stressed that with a projected 1990 population of 152,000\*\*\* a continuing program of acquisition is going to be required to keep the urban area's park acreage available for use and development in step with the standards for acres per 1,000 population. The existing total acres of 766.91 will need to be more than doubled to 1,520 acres. Caution should be exercised in acquiring areas to stress balance of types of park areas to urban population distribution.

## **B. CLASSIFICATIONS**

### **1. Play Lots**

Popularly referred to in large urban areas as "Vest Pocket Parks", this type of park is primarily designed to serve the recreation needs of preschool and grade school children in high density residential apartment areas. While sometimes in existing high density, or low income areas, the community shoulders the responsibility of providing this type of park, it should be primarily the responsibility of the developer to provide. They serve only a limited few within a single block or two. A minimum standard for such a park should be one acre to serve a population area of about 1,000 people.

### **2. Neighborhood Parks**

Appropriately named, this classification of a park is designed to serve a specific limited area of the community, or what are called neighborhoods. Neighborhoods naturally differ in size and dimension being governed largely by the arterial street system. Neighborhood parks are primarily designed for the active recreation pursuits of the young, but also adults. Size in relation to population in this type of park is important because of the differences in neighborhood population, densities, and types of housing. Ideally, such parks should be located in conjunction with grade schools that serve the same neighborhood. Many schools, however, serve more than one neighborhood, so more than one neighborhood park may be required to serve an area of school influence. Standards to be considered for selecting this category of park are:

Size — Four acres minimum, 10 acres desirable.

Service Area — one-quarter mile to one-half mile.

Population Ratio — Two and one-half acres per 1,000 population.

### **3. Community Parks**

Again, the name of the park designates its use and purpose. Community parks are where swimming pools, tennis courts, picnic grounds, and other facilities for the broad range of adult recreation, as well as youth activities, are provided. These parks, because of types of facilities, necessarily must serve a large population area and occupy more space. Community parks serve groups of neighborhoods and are designed to meet not only the broad range of recreation needs of the people, but specific needs of the section of the community they serve. This variance in recreation pursuits is brought out in the user survey.

Again, size in comparison to population density is important when establishing such a park, but in this case facilities to be provided is of added importance. Standards for a community park are as follows:

Size — 10 acres to 20 acres.

Service Area — Up to one mile.

Population Ratio — Two and one-half acres per 1,000 population.

It should be noted that in the case of some community parks, they may be increased in size to accommodate neighborhood park facilities, to avoid duplication when the community park could serve the neighborhood around it.

\*\*\*City/County Planning Board

#### 4. Regional Parks

Regional parks might be better called resource based parks because they are selected primarily to preserve, and make available for public use and enjoyment, areas of outstanding scenic, natural or cultural value and to provide recreation activities that can only be performed or enjoyed in such large, natural areas, such as driving, horseback riding, hiking, nature study, boating, fishing, etc.

These regional parks cannot be “created” in the sense that you can develop significant resource values. Every community has some natural area such as a river, open drainages, wooded areas, etc., that automatically qualify for this type of park because of its very nature.

Limitations on size for this type of park cannot be determined exactly because it is determined by the limit of the natural resource itself. It is felt, however, that no such park should be too small and ideally should be no less than 50-100 acres.

Regional parks are meant to serve the entire urban area, and the system should provide at least five acres per 1,000 population. County park systems often provide areas in this category.

Open spaces regardless of size fall into this category, as already mentioned, because open spaces are primarily designed to preserve a natural environment within a community, but also must be utilized and available to the public.

### C. FACILITY STANDARDS

As mentioned above, no rule can be set as to the type or number of facilities to be provided in a given category of park because of the diverse nature of the parks, and the park areas themselves. Shown below are some of the facilities generally associated with each category of park. These facilities reflect the intended purpose of each park.

#### 1. Neighborhood Parks

- Playground
- Play Apparatus
- Shelter
- Open Areas - for group games
- Softball diamond w/backstop
- Paved multi-use area for games, roller skating, basketball
- Passive play area (horseshoes)
- Landscaping
- Walks and paths

#### 2. Community Parks

- Play area for preschool children
- Apparatus area for older children
- Field House or recreation building
- Adults area (shuffle board - horseshoes)
- Open areas
- Picnic area for groups
- Paved multi-use area
- Wading pool
- Passive play area
- Swimming pool
- Ice skating rink
- Baseball and Softball
- Football
- Theater or bandshell
- Landscape areas
- Parking area
- Paths and walks
- Open space

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. GENERAL

Billings has a relatively young population, evidenced by more than 30,000 children under 21 in the School District. It is also a mobile population, with around 50,000 passenger vehicles in operation at this time.

Much of Billings' population today, as well as over the years, has migrated from the high plains and the prairie states, with a high frequency of rural and small town background. Because of this background there is a high priority for recreation activity outside the periphery of the urban area. This demonstrated need for "getting away from the city," for hiking, fishing, hunting, picnicking, camping, and more recently winter sports, is easily understandable because of the following factors:

1. high mobility;
2. fine road network throughout the region;
3. abundance of local forests, mountains, and general wilderness conditions, as well as resorts and recreation ranches;
4. an ever increasing affluency;
5. abundant big game and upland bird hunting.

Recreation "in town" seems clearly second choice during the warm months of the summer. Parks and playgrounds that are intensively used by children during the week when parents are tied down to work, are largely deserted on weekends, except for organized groups and special groups such as tennis players.

The availability of large areas of high quality recreation lands within a short drive, as indicated above, means that there will not be a high demand for development of outlying regional recreation lands as a part of the Billings Urban Park System. Development of regional parks should utilize prime natural resource lands close to the city in order for these parks to fill a real need.

Population estimates, based upon several independent forecasts, would indicate a growth of as much as 100 per cent in the urban area population by 1990. Based on the standards as outlined in this report, the urban area will require approximately 750 additional acres of parklands.

#### 1. Priority

Based on findings as contained in this report a priority for acquisition and development of parks, recreation, and open space facilities in Billings would seem to be:

##### a. General

- (1) Acquiring, or otherwise preserving from adverse development areas of natural resources for regional parks as outlined on the plan.
- (2) Cooperative City-County park planning and development within the metropolitan area to serve those portions of the urban population outside the city limits.
- (3) Development and expansion of community park areas for family and group picnics and related activities.
- (4) A modern, central athletic park complex to serve the entire urban area and collegiate institutions.

##### b. Specific

#### (1) Acquisition

River Park (Josephine Park to South Bridge)  
Poly Vista  
Billings Heights Area Community Park

Coulson Park  
The Rims

(2) Development

Complete Rose Park  
Development of neighborhood and community parks  
Construct ice skating rink  
River Park - long term development program  
Arnold Drain - BLI Ditch Green Belt - long term development program  
Bitterroot  
North and South Park renovation  
Coulson Park  
Swords Park  
Zimmerman Park  
Pioneer Park  
West Park  
Poly Vista

**B. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

Without a detailed study of available lands within existing neighborhood areas, and knowledge of detail plans for development of future neighborhoods, as well as school locations, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact size or site for a proposed neighborhood park. General locations for expanded and new neighborhood parks, based on criteria as set forth in the standards, have been used. These general areas of need are based upon known arterial streets and projected areas of urban growth as furnished by the consultants for the comprehensive plan.

Development of these neighborhood parks being on a high priority, it is recommended a detailed study be implemented in cooperation with the School Board to determine specific needs and locations at an early date so that land can be acquired before escalation of land values.

There is a need for new neighborhood parks in high density residential areas surrounding the Central Business District. These areas will tend to increase in density because of the changing character of the housing (high density apartments), and efforts should be made to acquire open land whenever it would become available, or to provide means whereby developers of these new high density apartment type residential developments would be required to set aside and develop adequate playlots.

There is also a shortage in development of the neighborhood parks in new residential subdivisions. The individual park comments below are not intended as a priority, but rather are listed in numerical order corresponding to the number as it appears in the inventory and on the plan.

Because of the shortage of parks, and especially developed parks in this category, and because of the necessity of developing and maintaining a system with inadequate finances, it is recommended that consideration be given to developing neighborhood parks by creating special improvement districts within the neighborhood served by the park. This would assure development and maintenance as neighborhoods develop and people wanted park facilities. It would also serve to relieve the general tax funds for development of community and regional parks that serve a broader segment of the general population.

The city and county can establish special improvement districts and rural improvement districts for park development and maintenance purposes under existing statutes (RMC 16-1601 and RMC 11-906).

The county, in the absence of a joint city-county development program, should use the rural improvement district system for maintenance or development of neighborhood parks. The county (RMC 62-201) may increase the park-recreation mill levy through a vote of the people. It would appear the county could, if such a levy were approved, raise funds in this manner for park maintenance within the urban area, and not have it fall under the \$5,000 limitation imposed by state statutes..

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

### No. 4 GRANDVIEW

The extension of 30th really makes this park function as two parks. The area is attractive because of the many trees. The playfield should be retained in the east block, and a very limited amount of general recreation facilities such as walks, benches, playground, and open shelter should be considered for the west block.

### No. 9 TERRY

An old park, the area has not developed the pleasant qualities of many new parks and should be redesigned by a professional Landscape Architect. Considerably more planting, walks, and recreation development should be provided. All the facilities show signs of extremely heavy use. During visits to the park the number of children was amazing as was the absence of adults. The fire station location in public parkland is an unjustifiable result of poor planning.

### No. 15 ARROWHEAD

Present development consists of a Little League field poorly located in terms of total park development. There is no play area closer than Bench School, and there is an evident need for some recreation development in the Heights. The entire block to the east of the present park should be acquired and the park expanded and developed.

### No. 18 STREETER

Present development leaves a lot to be desired. The play equipment is rather unattractive and the park area does not encourage use. Residential development in the area is sufficient to justify park improvement. Development must be intense due to the limited space.

### No. 19 EVERGREEN

A heavily used park which could benefit from further planting and some adult use areas (horseshoes, shuffleboard), as well as benches.

### No. 21 MARIPOSA

This park is heavily used by the neighborhood residents. The planting is not particularly well arranged for easy maintenance, but is pleasant to look at. Some adult facilities needed, including an open shelter. The sand pit should be expanded to include a creative playground.

### No. 23 BURG

A pleasant area but sadly deficient in development. No facilities for adults, such as walks and an open shelter.

### No. 26 PONDEROSA

Flat land, can be easily developed.

### No. 27 GORHAM

Beginning to develop into a pleasant park. The recreation building appears dirty and poorly kept, probably due to a lack of storage space, general apathy and a general lack of concern on the part of the area residents. More walks and paved play areas needed near the recreation building. Many additional trees should be started immediately.

### No. 32 HAWTHORN

It would be really stretching a point to call this a developed park. Trees and play equipment indicate the area residents desire for some park development. Failure to provide proper maintenance will result in loss of present development.

### No. 33 MADSEN

Acquire minimum of additional acres before residential development precludes expansion.

**No. 34 CHARLES RUSSELL**

Develop in future as Lockwood area develops.

**No. 37 SACAJAWEA**

Sacajawea Park is developing into a beautiful park. More walks and some benches, as proposed on the Master Plan, are needed around the recreation building. The building itself is poorly kept inside due to lack of storage space. Paving should be considered in the heavily used area around the Little League diamond.

**No. 38 LILLIS--MEADOWLARK**

It is too early to tell how the park will draw; however, preliminary evidence shows heavy use. Arnold Drain should be developed to Spring Creek Park.

**No. 39 POW WOW**

No public access at present. Potentially a beautiful park with amenities such as Rims and Alkali Creek.

**No. 44 LAMPMAN**

No access at present. Revenues being realized from farming should go into Park Department Fund.

**No. 46 WESTWOOD**

Present development is insufficient for population served and heavily used. Park should be expanded to the south when open land is platted.

**No. 49 COMANCHE**

Being used for softball now, improvement needed.

**No. 51 LOCKWOOD**

The only park with any signs of attempted development in Lockwood. The facilities are inadequate and show signs of extremely heavy use on the ballfields. A park designated Brooksdale Park should be included in development of this park. The park area is being used for alfalfa production and horse grazing at present. The fees for private use of the park should be earmarked for park use only. Access to the park is good. Screening should be developed along the Schultz & Lindsay Construction yard.

**No. 52 RIM POINT**

Topography could make for an interesting development.

**No. 53 SHARON (outside of jurisdictional area)**

Should be kept, but undeveloped pending future development of the area.

**No. 54 VALLEY (outside of jurisdictional area)**

Should be kept, but undeveloped pending future development of area.

**No. 55 BURLINGTON**

**No. 56 GRAND ACRES**

**No. 57 CEDAR**

**No. 60 BILLINGS HEIGHTS**

Potentially a nice park, if properly improved. The present ball diamond, Babe Ruth size, is excessively large for the area and should not be further improved until a Master Plan is prepared; it may have to be relocated to permit optimum park development. As much land as possible should be acquired on the north side.

**No. 61 BYRON NELSON**

Topography could make playfield development difficult, concentrate on other park features.

**No. 64 HIGHLAND**

An old, heavily used park needing rehabilitation. The toilet building is an eyesore, and should be relocated and replaced. Playground equipment is in need of rehabilitation, relocation, and the addition of a creative play area. Walks are in bad condition. No facilities for adult use.

**No. 66 SPRING CREEK**

A very pretty park with Spring Creek a pleasant amenity. Benches should be rebuilt, they are presently not up to the standards set in other parks.

**No. 67 DICKIE**

Expand into flat land on northwest side.

**No. 68 ORCHARD**

Recommend retaining for use as future neighborhood park.

**No. 69 MILLICE**

Good chance for school-park relationship, if School Board is willing to relocate some existing facilities.

**No. 70 BOULDER**

Development is limited to special interest groups, i.e., Little League. The Master Plan provides for school-park integration and should be pursued. Fences on ballfield should be removed in further development of park, and Little League moved to a complex at West Park. Pavement would be desirable along the street at the ball diamond as grass will be difficult to establish and maintain. Ditch bank should be included in development as water shall be removed in near future.

**No. 73 BEL AIRE**

Residential development in the area should permit limited development and expansion immediately.

**No. 74 McKENZIE**

No flat land, development limited by topography. Acquire additional lands and convert to community park.

**No. 80 PINEVIEW**

To be developed and expanded as the Morledge Subdivision develops.

**No. 81 UNNAMED**

**No. 82 UNNAMED**

Develop and expand as area develops.

**No. 84 HARRIS**

Expand to permit playfield equipment.

**No. 85 HAKERT (outside jurisdictional area)**

Should be kept, but undeveloped pending future development of area.

**No. 86 PARADISE VALLEY**

Expand to south. Present shape could limit potential development.

**No. 89 HERITAGE**

Flat land, can be easily developed.

**No. 90 WALSH**

Access is poor as platted. Development would certainly benefit adjacent property much more than general public. Access should be improved. Best developed by SID.



**No. 91 EDGERTON**

Access is poor as platted. Development would certainly benefit adjacent property much more than general public. Access should be improved. Best developed by SID.

**No. 94 QUANTA**

Of marginal use depending on residential development.

**No. 95 KIWANIS**

Expand to east, adding at least two additional acres.

## **C. COMMUNITY PARKS**

It has been possible to make certain specific recommendations for existing community parks, and these are commented on below. Like neighborhood parks it is pretty hard to pinpoint exact locations for proposed community parks until it is determined exactly how lands beyond the present developed area are to be platted. These proposed areas are shown on the Master Plan by symbols generally locating the parks, and emphasizing their relationship to arterial streets and spacing so as to be within a one-mile distance of each residence.

One of the most important needs in this category is to acquire additional lands for the expansion of community parks in urban areas outside of the city limits. There is also some need for development of existing community parks in the total urban area as reflected in the total number of acres of undeveloped parklands shown earlier in this report.

Again, comments and recommendations on the specific community parks which follow are not intended as any priority, but are more in the line of a numerical listing.

## **COMMUNITY PARKS**

**No. 1 NORTH**

One of the oldest parks in Billings, North Park is showing signs of age and heavy use. The recreation building and storage sheds are in poor condition. The playground equipment shows signs of extremely heavy use, and is not up to modern standards. While the park has the asset of established plant material, there is need for general renovation. Use of the present facilities indicates a need for much expanded recreation potential. Consideration should be given to replacing or rehabilitating all existing buildings, removal of Naval Reserve Center, and inclusion of playfields, night lighting, additional ball diamonds, tennis courts, paved play courts, and a creative play area, combined with a new playground. Increase North Park by 2.41 acres with acquisition of block to north of North Park School, and closing of North 16th Street in that one block.

**No. 2 SOUTH**

A part of the original town, South Park was developed more than half a century ago. The park shows lack of professional planning, and is not adequate by current standards. Currently, there are no walks serving many areas of the park, flood irrigation renders many areas unusable for 2-3 days at a time, and the playground is completely substandard and inadequate. Congestion around the swimming pool could be helped with proper walk design, offstreet parking, and spectator decks. The park should be carefully studied, and a Master Plan prepared by a professional Landscape Architect. Consideration should be given to tree thinning and providing more open field play areas and ball diamonds, playgrounds, and creative play areas,



rehabilitated buildings, and adequate walk systems. The plan must be considered in light of the socio-economic groups being served by the park, and the resulting heavy usage.

#### **No. 6 PIONEER**

The only old park in town professionally designed. At the time of development Pioneer Park was on the outskirts of town. The park, now in the center of town, has a character found nowhere

nowhere else in the park system, which is the result of good planning and design. Some of the facilities, however, are showing signs of deterioration because of age and use in excess of the design capacities, i.e., the playground, wading pool, recreation class area. The road serving the picnic area should be shouldered and dead-ended west of the creek permitting access only from Virginia Lane, and offstreet parking should be provided for the picnickers. The area around the Recreation Department Building should be redesigned to better facilitate present use. The Memorial Garden should be redesigned, properly planted, and well maintained – it is the only “garden” in the entire park system at present and should, therefore, be a show place.

#### **No. 14 HILLNER**

A potentially beautiful park with a dry creek bed on one side, some nice trees, and the Lockwood Ditch along the southeast line. There is enough residential development in this area to justify immediate development and expansion of the park on a limited scale.

#### **No. 16 MEADOW LAKE**

Enlarge area to meet standards and accommodate facilities for community park. This community park is needed for serving people west of U.S. 10 that cuts them off from proposed Bitterroot Park. If this park continues to be used for pasture, revenue should go into Park Fund.

#### **No. 30 VETERANS PARK**

This park is heavily used by people throughout the city. Additional facilities should be considered such as walks, creative playground for small children, and adult facilities. Irrigation ditches should be removed when labor is available during winter. This park provides a good example of where a school-park combination works except in maintenance – the park looks nice, the school property unkept.

#### **No. 31 ROSE PARK**

A new park currently under development, Rose Park, like Pioneer, shows the results of professional design. The park is being developed for intensive active recreation use in line with today's and future standards, while providing for passive recreation in the developing character is badly needed so all ages and segments of the population are served, rather than just the special interest pressure groups. Every effort should be made to develop the areas around the school as indicated on the Master Plan, as this area is presently unsightly and dormant space.

#### **No. 35 POLY VISTA**

An existing park, but of inadequate acreage to serve as a community park. Additional acreage should be purchased to meet the requirements for a community park. In addition, enough acreage should be acquired to provide for eventual development of a grade school in conjunction with this park.

#### **No. 36 OPTIMIST PARK**

A new park currently under development, Optimist Park has received the same professional design consideration discussed under Pioneer and Rose Park. The ditch crossing the middle of the park will adversely affect use, and should be closed at the earliest possible date. If the vandalism continues, no further development should be permitted.

#### **No. 47 WEST PARK**

Access to this park is quite good, and the land can be easily developed. Planting should proceed at the earliest possible date. A large baseball-softball complex should be installed here –

#### **No. 65 CENTRAL PARK**

The rapidly developing trees and new recreation building are going to encourage a much heavier general use of this park in the future. The Babe Ruth League field is valuable, however, the hideous array of fences and signs should be removed, and new bleachers constructed. There is need for development of additional recreation facilities serving the broad spectrum of community needs. The school property on the southwest corner creates a bad impression for the park, and should be grassed and generally improved.

#### **PROPOSED BITTERROOT SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARK**

The School Board has indicated a need for development of a Junior High School in the Billings Heights area. If such a Junior High School could be developed in the vicinity of the existing Bitterroot Grade School, and at the time at least 20 additional acres be purchased and developed as a community park in conjunction with these two schools, it would serve to ideally meet the recommendations of this study.

### **D. REGIONAL PARKS (includes Open Space)**

As previously stated, the need for regional parks is diminished by the abundance of existing recreation opportunities within a three hour driving distance. There is, however, as also stated, a dire need to set aside certain natural resources in the immediate area of the City in order not only to preserve and protect them, but to provide for public use and enjoyment for them for today and future generations.

Whether these natural resource areas are classified as regional parks, or open space seems immaterial. The important thing is that they be set aside. It seems appropriate to classify both open space and regional parks into the one category of regional parks because open space must be made available for public use and enjoyment.

Specific recommendations, as outlined below, for each regional park are not intended as a substitute for good plans. Each area must be carefully studied and planned on its individual merits. Every effort should be made either to acquire these lands, or provide for open space or flood plan zoning, to assure the lands will not be lost to adverse development and unreasonable escalation in price.

## **REGIONAL PARKS**

### **1. EXISTING REGIONAL PARKS**

#### **No. 3 COMMUNITY**

Picnic use is dropping off with the Interstate open. Park is used as outdoor space by local residents and Central High School. Should be rehabilitated in line with present and future use. Consideration should be given to facilities for older citizens.

#### **NO. 5 - 63 SWORDS**

Development in these areas at present consists of some worn-out roads and poorly placed picnic tables. Some development should be considered below Highway 3 along Alkali Creek, but the rest of the area should be limited to a scenic drive with appropriate parking, some picnic tables, and historical displays. The cemetery should be renovated and maintained as a historic site. Some method of controlling access must be developed so as to prevent erosion from the many dirt roads developing all over the park. Swords Park serves as the eastern anchor to an enlarged regional park encompassing the entire Rims.

#### **No. 7 DIVISION**

New benches and walks would be desirable.

**No. 8 ALPHABET**

Should consider installing groundcovers and shrubs in lieu of grass to reduce maintenance and present unsightly condition. The garden clubs would be a good source of funds and plants for such a program. Present use indicates a need for some additional walks.

**No. 10 WEST ENTRANCE**

Should consider upgrading with shrubs and groundcover. Extend planting all the way to overpass. One additional tract width will be needed for landscape development.

**No. 11 ZIMMERMAN**

A beautiful park area, Zimmerman Park is being destroyed through lack of development and management, as well as public apathy. The damage to the park values of the area by the recently constructed micro-wave tower (on a permanent lease for only \$1,000) is incalculable. This intrusion of private development into a public park is beyond comprehension or justification. Consideration should be given to deeding the Park to the City of Billings, if the county cannot exhibit more consideration for park values than to allow such intrusion on public park properties.

**No. 12 JOSEPHINE (includes 3 Big Sky Islands)**

Josephine is owned by the Water Department and scheduled for development as expanded water plant facilities are needed. Only one small portion on the west will not be needed for water plant expansion. It is felt that this one portion would serve as an excellent location for parking and access to the three islands which were recently purchased for park use. These islands, for planning purposes, have been considered a part of Josephine Park. The islands should be planned and developed as open space and natural areas, with possible use for limited group camping. Access should be by trail only, across a bridge or causeway, whichever proves to be most feasible. Josephine Park, like Coulson, affords public access and enjoyment of the river, and should be high on the development priority list because of the present lack of public access and use of the river. Josephine Park would serve as the downstream anchor to the proposed river park covered later in this section.

**No. 22 CAMERON**

Limited space for active recreation development because of terrain and trees. Should be cleaned up, planted, and walks added to serve more passive recreation activities.

**No. 28 ATHLETIC**

Athletic Park is placed in the regional parks category solely due to the presence of Cobb Field, and its service as a community-wide recreation facility. The field is reaching a condition in which periodic maintenance cannot keep pace with deterioration indefinitely. The present need, coupled with obvious growth in organized athletics, justifies a comprehensive facility for centralized athletic activity in the urban area. When Cobb Field should be replaced, the conversion of this tract into more broadly usable community park type facility seems advisable. A true athletic park complex would require a tract of land approximately 40 acres in size. The tract selected should be centrally located to the entire community, and be accessible by major arterial streets to all segments of the urban development, with adequate parking.

Considerable study and attention has been given to the development of the fairgrounds for this type of facility. The fairgrounds should be considered only under the condition that adequate accessibility is provided, and that an effective plan can be worked out for both development and management that would be compatible with the operation of the fairgrounds in its present context. The biggest deterrents to the use of the fairgrounds is accessibility and space. No comprehensive plan has been prepared to date that shows the fairgrounds would accommodate a truly urban athletic complex as envisioned above while also serving the long-range development goals of the Fair Board to meet other increasing year around uses.

If a comprehensive athletic complex cannot be worked out in conjunction with the fairgrounds, then such a complex should be developed in conjunction with a civic center (for indoor recreation, and activities) on the south side of Billings. A southside location would have the advantage of closer proximity to colleges, hotel and motel accommodations, businesses, the population center, existing and future accessibility by the interstate and major arterial streets. It would also be a viable addition towards growth and development of the South Side.

#### **NO. 29 TWO MOON**

Adjacent to the river, Two Moon Park is in the heart of the industrial section. Access is such that other areas upriver, when acquired, would better serve as park areas for public use and access to the river. This area is, however, vitally important as an open space along the river at the entrance to the City for people travelling the Interstate. The area should be cleaned up and developed only in such a manner that it will assure it will always be a natural and attractive open space with some possibility of public use.

#### **No. 40 SUN VALLEY**

Leave in present state as undisturbed natural areas, and link with additional regional parks along the Rims.

#### **No. 41 BRIDLE MOON**

Leave in present state as undisturbed natural areas, and link with additional regional parks along the Rims.

#### **No. 45 UNNAMED (Lampman Subdivision)**

This unnamed park lies along the Ditch, and should be retained to serve as a part of the total regional park encompassing the Ditch (see proposed regional parks).

#### **No. 48 COULSON**

A beautiful park adjacent to the Yellowstone River with scenic elements and plant communities not available anywhere else in the Billings area. Control and development is necessary to prevent further destruction of the amenities by the public. The development south of the park and along the access road is very unsightly. The south end of the island should be purchased immediately. This park would provide an excellent area for an arboretum. The river orientation of this park to Billings Heights make development extremely urgent, as public access to the river is limited and undeveloped. A Master Plan should be prepared from which service groups, etc., could begin development.

#### **No 58 AFFLERBAUGH**

Should be extended westward along Rims and Ditch to include Rims around base of reservoir. Room is available for sitting areas and walks near east end of park.

#### **No. 83 SKYLINE PARKS (includes No. 13, Panoramic Heights; No. 42, Durland; No. 50, Dick Logan; No. 88, Heffner; No. 93, Ribs Ridge)**

Park area should be expanded to include face of Rims from Swords Park to beyond Zimmerman Park. Land above Rims from airport to beyond Zimmerman Park should also be acquired for picnicking, scenic overlooks, and to protect the skyline. Gravelled parking and roads along highway should be redesigned into parking bays and planted strips. In its present form it is an eyesore, subject to misuse, and does not display optimum view angles. Meyers Trail and other foot trails up the Rims should be improved and their use encouraged.

#### **No. 92 STEWART**

Stewart Park, while not set aside to preserve a natural resource, is of a large enough size (some 40 acres) to accommodate an active recreation facility to serve the entire urban area. The acreage far exceeds the requirements for a community park, and Stewart Park is fairly close to an existing community park by being only a short distance from West Park. The land is flat and Stewart Park will contain, in the future, water reservoirs developed by the Water Department.

## **2. PROPOSED REGIONAL PARKS**

### **A REGIONAL PARK ALONG THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER**

This park should be an upstream major extension of Josephine Park. It should be a strip of land ranging up to half a mile wide (including islands in the river), and should control the entire north bank of the river as far upstream as the point opposite the mouth of Duck Creek eventually, but at least to the Blue Creek bridge in the immediate future.

Consideration should be given to adding attractive tracts of isolated bottomland which lie as pockets below rough strips of benchland on the south side of the river, but north bank acquisition should take precedence over these tracts.

Land requirement: roughly 2,000 acres, practically all of which is marginal land not now used for agriculture.

Such a park would preserve the scenic and other natural values along the river. It would provide both scenic open space land, and a reserve for future park development. In an acreage of this size, there is ample room for development of attractive family and group picnic facilities, day camp and outdoor centers, separated by large blocks of open spaces.

It is envisioned that acquisition and development of the shoreline and bottomlands would afford Billings the most unique parkland west of the Mississippi.

It is also envisioned as a means to provide for a scenic loop drive from downtown Billings, out South 27th Street, along the river, returning into the west end of Billings and hooking up hopefully, either with an expanded and continuing parkway type drive, or belt road, as might be designated in planning for the arterial system of the City. Should such a parkway be a reality someday, it would afford not only unlimited driving, but also bicycling, trails, and system of recreation areas comparable to the magnificent Minnehaha Parkway System along the Mississippi River and around the City of Minneapolis.

### **SOUTH 27th STREET PARKWAY**

Perhaps the greatest opportunity to enhance the appearance and environment of Billings is the concept of a parkway approach to the Central Business District along South 27th Street. At present, the two major entrances to Billings from the east and west are alleys of commerce, with their ever present dirt, neon signs, and garrish pennant waving advertisements. Approaching Billings through such tentacles of ugliness surely does not give the visitor a true picture of Billings' environment. Why not have one entrance to our City that reflects the true nature and character of the town? Such a parkway entrance, as herein proposed, would do this.

Most tourists who travel the Interstate across the nation have come to learn that the middle exit off the Interstate is the shortest distance to the Central Business District from that Interstate. This is the case of South 27th Street, and we look for an ever increasing rise in traffic.

Possibly, South 27th Street, if designated as a parkway by the State Highway Department, could qualify by 100 per cent federal funds for acquisition and development. A frontage road could be established along the present alley line, allowing equal opportunity for commercial developments. This is not a new or uncommon practice and allows for pleasant green open space along each side of the approach.

The number of existing trees along South 27th Street today could be the basis for a most unusual and unique landscaped park approach to downtown Billings. This could be made a Memorial Parkway, with each tree representing a living memorial to past and future war veterans of the community.

This is one opportunity that has already begun to be lost by the development of service stations near the Interstate, but could still be an effective reality. With the property lines only one foot back of the curb line, South 27th Street will, unless action is forthcoming, be an even worse and more congested area than either existing entrance or Grand Avenue.



## **SCENIC OPEN SPACES ALONG THE RIMS**

This should include not only the crest of the Rims, but the face of the Rims. Land should be acquired which will link all present city and county parkland holdings from Swords Park to Zimmerman Park, and extend on to the point of the Rims overlooking the Yellowstone Country Club, and should also include land along the Rims on the southwest margin of Alkali Creek Valley.

Such a tract would preserve both the crest and the face of the Rims from intrusive development. To most travelers by surface or by air, the Rims are Billings' "Trade-Mark," and they are certainly the City's outstanding scenic attraction.

## **THE BBWA DITCH — LONG RANGE POTENTIAL**

Regardless of how it is accomplished (covering or abandonment), the BBWA Ditch should be a part of the recreational park system. In the long run, this Ditch must either be covered or routed around the main developed areas of the City. Some study has been made in the past of the possibility of covering the Ditch. Another study considers the feasibility of moving the water past the City in the river, and then pumping it up to ditch level at some point northeast of the City.

A study should be made of a third alternative. This alternative would involve taking water from the Ditch at its highest point west of the urban area, and pumping it up to the level of the Rims. It would then be possible to make use of existing drainageways to provide water for both the proposed Five Fingers and Two Moon Lakes, returning the water to the Ditch east of Lake Elmo.

When the Ditch is eliminated through the City, the right-of-way should be developed with emphasis on trails suitable for hiking, bicycling, and riding, with well-landscaped plantings, and well-spaced family and small group picnic facilities.

Such a strip of scenic open space should be linked by a comparable strip to the western part of the open space lands along the river. It would have a natural connection to parklands proposed along Arnold Drain. It should be linked at its eastern extremity, via a strip of fairgrounds' land, to the river. These strip parks should be extended along other ditches and drains as the City moves westward.

## **ARNOLD DRAIN**

Now that the Arnold Drain has been covered, it should be developed as a regional park and recreation area. Under no circumstances should private lands adjacent to the Drain be allowed to infringe or use this space for private development.

## **FIVE FINGERS LAKE**

The general location of the proposed Five Fingers Lake is indicated on the Master Plan. While the primary purpose of this lake would be for flood control in the Alkali Creek drainage, it will also serve as an attractive but limited recreation resource. The character of the topography creating the Five Fingers will give it steep, rocky shores. This type of shoreline will add to the scenic value of the lake, but limit access for such recreation activities as swimming. Trails for hiking and spaces for picnicking around the lake, with scenic overlooks, will be one of its primary assets to the regional park system. The narrowness of the Fingers, especially if there is insufficient water to maintain a full pool, will limit the recreation use of the lake surface mainly to fishing and small boats. Combined with Medicine Crow Lake, Five Fingers Lake will create the needed water recreation activities to satisfy the demand for a regional parks system as envisioned in this study.

#### MEDICINE CROW LAKE

The proposed Medicine Crow Lake as shown on the Master Plan would serve as a viable recreation asset to the urban area of Billings. While the riverfront park herein proposed would give plenty of water-oriented recreation activity, and preserve a great natural resource, the river would be no place for active water sports activities.

Medicine Crow Lake would be upwards to 300 acres. The configuration of the lake would allow adequate open water, and its size would allow for adequate zoning to accommodate all types of water-based sports activities, such as water skiing. Adequate shoreline areas are indicated on the Master Plan to provide not only access, but related activities such as campgrounds, picnic areas, etc.

The feasibility of this appears to be good even without the consideration of pumping the Big Ditch to the top of the Rims, as suggested earlier in the report. The present Ditch loops around at this point and has many problems of leakage. The Ditch, could be run across the top of the dam forming the lake, thus saving the Ditch Company considerable mileage in maintenance and repair, while at the same time allowing for a source of water to keep the lake full, if there wasn't enough natural moisture coming down Five Mile Creek.

In this same light no public regional park status indicated for Lake Elmo. Due to the closeness of private homes, plus the fact there is a major trap club on one side, Lake Elmo should remain in private hands for private recreation development. It is not of an adequate size to properly serve as a major water area and active recreation use.

#### E. ABANDONMENT OF PARKS

Due to various circumstances, primarily due to the lack of specific standards and planning in the past, the present Billings Park System contains numerous small dedicated park areas. Most of these areas are less than an acre in size, and many of them lie outside of the developed area of the city.

Such small parks, not only are inadequate for development as parks under standards as set forth in this report, but oftentimes are poorly located and constitute a major maintenance problem for the Park Department. It is recommended that as time progresses these parks be abandoned or converted back to land for development within the subdivision in lieu of creating adequate size parks for neighborhood development as recommended on the Master Plan.

The specific parks recommended for abandonment are:

No. 17 PINEHILL  
No. 20 SMITH  
No. 25 VALLEYVIEW  
No. 43 CYNTHIA  
No. 59 DOKKEN  
No. 62 PALISADES  
No. 71 ROBERT TRENT JONES  
No. 72 SALLY ANN

No. 75 DRY CREEK  
No. 76 LUTHERAN  
No. 77 BYRNES-STEPHEN  
No. 78 ROLLING HILL  
No. 79 WILLIAM JOHNSTON  
No. 81 UNNAMED  
No. 87 SHAWNEE

## **F. URBAN (CITY-COUNTY) PARK DEVELOPMENT**

It has already been pointed out that there is a need for development of parklands outside the present city limits. The limitations of existing State Statutes puts a considerable burden on the county to develop parklands, although the county has not to date taken advantage of what permissiveness is allowed under State Statutes.

The county feels it is presently handicapped in park maintenance by State Statutes (RMC 62-102) which limits to \$5,000 monies which is derived from the General Fund for maintenance. State Statutes specifically state, however, this limitation does not effect maintenance money derived from other sources, such as leases, nor does State Law set any limit on acquisition and development funds.

The county presently derives a small amount of funds from leases of parklands, which is put into the County Building Fund. Chapter 48, Section 16-4803, specifically states that all money raised from leases, sales, etc., of parks shall be placed in a separate account known as the "Park Fund." Such a fund should be established immediately in compliance with State Law. In addition, the county may levy a one-mill tax for operation of a recreation center (RMC 16-1179). It would seem through broad interpretation of the term "Recreation Center" funds derived from such a levy could be used to maintain certain facilities within various parks. In addition, RMC 84-4702 and RMC 62-201, allow the city and county to increase the park recreation mill levy through a vote of the people, which would be one way to raise funds for park maintenance, if the State Statutes could not be ultimately changed to increase revenue.

The obvious demand for development of park and recreation facilities outside the City limits, as reflected in the Users' Survey, coupled with the fact that there is no development in any County Park to meet this demand, seems to point to the need for some sort of a Park District, or cooperative planning acquisition and development program with the City to provide for the needs of the people in the total urban area, not just within the City.

In many areas of the country the Park District serves this need. We have, in Appendix D, included a specific park districting law in effect in the State of Illinois. It is not intended to suggest that this Law would be specifically applied to Billings or Montana, except for the fact that we must develop and maintain parks on a total urban basis, just as we are planning on a total urban basis.

If a Park District were not able to be realized, some sort of joint agreement under existing enabling legislation should be affected. Such a joint agreement should be affected immediately pending legislation, such as a Park District Law, in order that the immediate needs can be met.

There is existing legislation, such as RMC 62-211 and RMC 62-4904, which permit agreement between various governmental units for conducting various desirable programs. State Law, RMC 62-268, actually permits consolidating park and recreation commissions, and further, RMC 62-211 and 62-4904, permits jointly pursuing recreation facility development and operation with the School Board.

State Statutes (RMC Chapter 48, Sec. 16-1131) allows the counties to deed land to the city for park purposes, and RMC 62-20 allows the city to operate parks outside the corporate limits of the city. It would seem to us that under existing statutes, and with a little bit of effort, an interim agreement, or administrative organization could be set up to facilitate development of undeveloped parklands now owned by the county and the city to better serve the needs of developing areas. A great deal of the reason that parks have not been developed in the areas outside of the city limits is the lack of effort and interest on the part of county officials, and the lack of understanding that there could be some development under existing State Statutes by both the county government and the people in these areas. Even with limited liberties allowed under existing statutes, by taking advantage of the various state and federal programs available for park and recreation development, much could be accomplished, and should be.

## **G. SCHOOL/PARK DEVELOPMENT**

Schools, particularly grade schools, are both child and neighborhood oriented. Neighborhood and community parks also are child and neighborhood oriented. It would seem logical then that for the maximum efficiency of land purchase and development, as well as maintenance, schools and parks should be purchased and planned as one.



The advantages of such school/park development should be obvious. By joint use of open playground facilities, both the School Board and the Park Department save in total acreage of land needed for each facility. In a cooperative maintenance development, the School Board particularly would realize a saving, and at the same time realize a better job of ground maintenance. There would also be the added saving realized through elimination of duplication of outdoor play areas, parking areas, and other activities. Whenever new schools are purchased adequate land should be purchased at the same time adjacent to the school to provide for the development of a neighborhood park facility. In some instances, schools can be part of a community park, providing even more advantage to the school because of the additional open space and lands provided in this type of park. No parkland purchase should be made without first consulting the school district to determine land needs and coordinate such purchase activities.

In the development and use of such park/school areas, either party could acquire lands to be repurchased by the other, if funds were not immediately available to purchase them in a joint venture. Arrangements could be made for joint development and maintenance to, perhaps, offset some of the purchase costs on a portion of the land. In other words, there are many different approaches and ways of accomplishing actual development of a park/school facility, and every effort should be made to work out a program beneficial to both.

## H. LEGISLATION

As mentioned throughout this report, many of the problems of acquisition, development, and operation of the parks, both within the City and outside of the City within the urban area of Billings, are attributable to the legislative framework of the State of Montana and the limitations invoked by State Statutes. Most of the legislative framework dictated by these State Statutes evolved before there were significant urban areas within the State of Montana and associated problems. There should be an exerted effort on the part of all cities, through their individual representatives and cooperative organizational framework to secure new legislation that will enable them to plan for development and operation of park systems, as well as other aspects of city government.

It would not be possible for us to spell out specific legislation that would solve all problems. Indicated in this report are areas where legislation will be needed to permit certain specific things to be accomplished.

Following are some general comments regarding legislation that apply to more than just the parks and recreation system, but would affect the system, its planning and development, if they could be realized.

1. It would be desirable to effect legislation that would allow a more coherent and responsible framework for the administration of the park and recreation system. We believe a more effective way would be to have the department heads directly responsible to the Mayor (or City Manager, if such a form of government were ever enacted), and then he, in turn, would be responsible to the Council.
2. Legislation is needed to eliminate the ceilings on general and specific mill levies by subordinate levels of government. We do not believe that the rural-oriented legislation should set the limits of spending, and of indebtedness for urban areas within the state.
3. Either mill levies should be raised, or other sources of income, such as a sales tax, should be sought to provide the income that is going to be needed to continue to develop and maintain a viable park system. Under a statewide sales tax program, if enacted, we would like to recommend efforts be made to allow local communities to have a local option tax. This has proven to be most beneficial in the State of Wyoming in relieving the tax burden on local urban areas in trying to raise additional monies. If such a provision were adopted as part of a state tax legislation, Yellowstone County and the cities and towns within the county would have about \$3,000,000 per year in additional funds to add to their total present tax receipts.
4. Montana's cities should seek legislation that would specifically authorize metropolitan park districts, which could finance, acquire, and operate a comprehensive system of parks. Each such district should be able to function as a taxing and title-holding unit, with actual operation carried on by the district. Appendix D has a sample Park District Law which outlines the function and responsibilities of such a park district.

As envisioned a park district would not differ too much from the School District setup, in that it would be authorized to levy a tax as voted by the people to support a specific facility. In other words, creating such a district would not add any extra burden on the people, but give them a direct voice in how much of a park system they want and are willing to pay for.

5. Legislation should be enacted to replace the present Park Dedication Laws. Such legislation should require the presentation of an approved Master Development Plan, including provisions for adequate recreation lands as a prerequisite for subdivision tracts within an urban planning area. A part of the law should require continual upgrading of land evaluations when such subdivisions are platted to provide adequate monetary compensation for those subdivisions that are allowed to contribute money for parks in lieu of land within the subdivision itself. At present in the City of Billings oftentimes the developer is better off donating money than land because of the low valuations.

## **I. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Urban area agencies should make the most effective use of historic resources in the park and open space lands system. Suggested special developments, follow these general lines:

1. At the Luther "Yellowstone" Kelly grave: An interpretive exhibit on the role of the trappers, hunters, and wolfers in the opening of the Yellowstone Basin.
2. At "Boothill" Cemetery: An interpretive exhibit to relate the role of the Coulson settlement in the history of the Yellowstone Valley, and its relationship to Billings' early years.
3. At Josephine Park: An interpretive exhibit on the steamboat and mackinaw boat navigation of the Yellowstone. As a long-range goal, representative reconstruction of both types of boats, along with keel boats, dugouts, and bull boats might be displayed there.
4. The Indian Caves (outside of the urban area) deserves a modern interpretive visitor center, with exhibits and other media to tell effectively the sequential story and the relationships of the cultural levels represented at this site. This site is recognized as one of the most important archeological sites in the high plains.
5. At the Yellowstone County Historical Museum on the Rims: Modernize and expand this museum to provide room to tell the story of Yellowstone County through effective interpretive exhibits and related media.

Local government agencies and the public should support strongly the recognition and development of state and nationally significant historic sites, such as those listed in the Yellowstone County Outdoor Recreation Development report.

Local government agencies and citizens should initiate a study of locally significant historic sites and buildings, and develop a preservation, marking, and interpretive program.

## **J. LAND ACQUISITION AND FUNDING**

It would be difficult to pinpoint an exact number of acres to be acquired, following the recommendations of this study, until such time as specific Master Development Plans were prepared for each individual park. In general, however, if all of the recommendations as herein contained were followed for the next 21 years, the total holdings of parklands in all categories in the urban area of Billings would be in the neighborhood of 1,500-2,000 acres, and would bring the park holdings within the recommended levels for a city of the projected size by the year 1990.

Much of the land recommended for acquisition as regional parks would vary greatly in costs, due to the fact that much of it is of low commercial value. There is undoubtedly going to be some areas of higher costs, but at the same time there is going to be some donated lands. It certainly is not out of reason to expect that all such lands could cost a total of at least \$2,000,000. It must be reemphasized that many of these parcels will be acquired with the assistance of federal programs, state aid and, as mentioned, by donations.

The above general estimate of land acquisition costs could conceivably double, if action on some of the specific proposals was delayed. Land values are accelerating in the urban area at a rate similar to the rise in costs of operation and maintenance. As the urban area grows these land costs, in many instances, will increase to where they are almost out of reach which, as mentioned in the introduction, would cause a loss of the land to other types of urban development.

As shown in the chart in this report, the increasing operating and maintenance of the present City Park Department is fast catching up, and will exceed in a very short time the revenues available. These costs too will continue to rise, and provisions must be made for them. While the general evaluation of properties within the cities will continue to rise, it is questionable whether the rise in evaluation will keep up with the general rise in costs of labor, equipment, and material. It is not out of reason to project operating and maintenance costs for the year 1980 of one-half a million dollars, and even double that figure by the year 1990.

A careful and more detailed study of costs for both land acquisition, development, and operations should be undertaken. This study should incorporate detailed Master Plan studies for each proposed and existing area, so that accurate costs can be projected. Until such plans are developed it would be only crystal ball gazing to pinpoint such costs.

## K. MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS

In a general overall Master Development Plan such as this, it is difficult to include specific recommendations and location for individual items of recreation activity. Proper identification of needs and location of particular items must be based on individual analyses, demands, and Master Plan studies of areas.

There are a few specific needs that are rather apparent, however, and it was felt these should be mentioned in this report. They are as follows:

1. There is need in Billings for artificial skating rinks. The weather during the winter months in Billings, while at times cold, is not consistently cold enough throughout the winter months to enable the Park Department to maintain good skating ice. There are some winters when skating is limited to only two weeks because of the Chinook winds. It is recommended that a limited number of artificial rinks be established in various community parks. This does not mean that indoor skating rinks should be built, but possibly they could be partially covered with an open shelter. It would be possible to develop such open outdoor rinks by the installation of pipes under the surface of the turf to enable maintenance of ice even during Chinook periods.
2. One of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in Billings is tennis. It is believed that there would be a limited demand for year around tennis, if an indoor tennis court were constructed. It is recommended that a survey be made of the tennis players in Billings to determine if there would be enough of a demand for such a facility. Such facilities have proven to be quite popular, and very feasible in other cold climate cities.
3. As evidenced by the tournament play at the YMCA, handball is a very popular sport in the Billings area. It is recommended that consideration be given to the establishment of a few outdoor handball tennis courts to accommodate this demand during the warm summer months. It would be easy to determine if there would be such a demand because the handball players are fairly well organized.
4. As shown by the Users' Survey, the outdoor swimming facilities in the Billings Park System are intensively used for two months. It is believed that an active year around swimming program, to serve the urban needs during the fall, winter, and spring months, should be developed. At present such programs are conducted at the YMCA and Eastern Montana College. Rocky Mountain College is

constructing an indoor swimming pool, and there is talk of other organizations doing the same. There is not, however, any provision being made for development of indoor swimming facilities by the school system.

If the existing and proposed swimming facilities, being developed by the above-mentioned organizations and schools, do not meet the demand for a swimming program by the school system, it is recommended that the school system and the Park Department cooperate in the construction of a centrally located indoor/outdoor swimming facility to promote such a swimming program; and, at the same time, serve to add to the summertime program and relieve some of the pressure on existing pools. It is believed that under a cooperative development program such a facility would be feasible and possibly even self supporting. It would certainly be eligible for federal funds.

5. With the tremendous interest in skiing because of the proximity to Red Lodge, Montana, it is recommended that studies be made for the possibility of installing a beginner's ski hill on the slopes south of the river. This could be done in cooperation with private enterprise, and provide a facility with artificial snow to allow beginners to develop skills without having to drive all the way to Red Lodge. If such a development were constructed, it would stimulate skiing interest and be beneficial to Red Lodge.
6. While it has been stated the three existing golf courses meet the present demand for golf, it is recommended that consideration be given in years to come to an additional public golf facility. Two of the existing clubs are private clubs and not open to the public. It is believed that there would be a demand, and it could be shown to be feasible to develop a Par Three course in Billings. If this is not done by private enterprise in the near future, consideration should be given to development of such a course by the City.

## **L. FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

Where possible and practicable, the people of this area can solve most of their park and recreation problems with local resources. There are several types of federal programs, however, that constitute a worthwhile approach to "catching up" on the backlog of accumulated urban area problems. Some of the more important possibilities are:

1. Federal and federal/state programs which coordinate to finance planning activity, since meaningful planning activity is the prerequisite to effective local effort, and a legal requirement for state and federal assistance programs.
2. Land and Water Conservation Fund programs to assist planning and land acquisition.
3. Open Space Lands Program and funding for key scenic open space lands.

## **APPENDICES**

**A. Inventory of Existing Parks and Facilities**

**B. Montana Laws on Parks**

**C. Sample Park District Law (Illinois)**

## EXISTING PARK AND FACILITIES

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **MONTANA LAWS ON PARKS**

#### **MONTANA CODE TITLES BEARING UPON PARKS:**

- 62-201: Issuing Bonds for Parks and Grounds, Civic and Youth Centers
- 62-203: Appointment and Organization, Records and Reports for Park Commissioners
- 62-204: Powers and Duties of Park Commissions
- 62-205: Disbursement of Park Funds
- 62-206: Regulations for Park Board Meetings
- 62-207: Allowance of Claims by Park Boards
- 62-208: Swimming Pools, Skating Rinks, Playgrounds, Civic and Youth Centers and Museums
- 62-209, 62-210: Powers of the City Council
- 62-211, 62-212, 62-213, 62-214, 62-215: School Districts in Relation to Recreational Lands
- 16-4801 through 16-4807: County Parks
- 16-4901 through 16-4904: Interlocal Cooperation
- 84-4701 through 87-4077: Taxation and Funding
- House Joint Resolution No. 21: The Yellowstone River

#### **BILLINGS CODE SECTIONS PERTINENT TO PARKS:**

- Administration: Article XIV, Sections 2.100 and 2.101
- Chapter 32, Article 1, Sections 32.1 through 32.30

# APPENDIX C

## SAMPLE PARK DISTRICT LAW (ILLINOIS) EXCERPTS FROM ILLINOIS PARK DISTRICT LAWS

*Organization* — Any territory situated in the same county or in an adjoining counties under township organization and so lying as to form one connected area, and no portion of which is already included in a park district or in a township whose corporate authorities are authorized by law to levy special taxes or special assessments to maintain a public park, may be organized into a park district for the establishment, construction, and maintenance of public parks and boulevards (ch. 105).

### PARK COMMISSIONERS

*Petition; election; term; officers, etc.* — Any 100 voters resident within the limits of the proposed park district may petition the county judge in which such territory lies to cause the question of the organization of the proposed district to be submitted to the voters. The petition must clearly outline the territory to be embraced in the district, and its name. Whereupon the judge or judges must order an election to be held to determine the question of organization, and to elect 5 commissioners. If the majority of the votes cast are favorable, the park district is deemed to be organized, and the 5 persons who received the highest number of votes are to be the commissioners. When organized the district is to have the name designated in the petition. The name can be changed by ordinance approved by two-thirds of the commissioners. Each commissioner must be a voter of and reside within the district.

*POWERS OF PARK COMMISSIONERS.* — The commissioners elected in any park district constitute its corporate authorities, and a majority of them constitute a quorum at any meeting. They are empowered —

1. To pass ordinances, rules, and regulations for the proper management and conduct of business and for carrying into effect the objects for which the district was formed.
2. To manage and control all the officers and property of the district, and all parks, boulevards, and driveways maintained by the district or committed to its care and custody.
3. To regulate the use by the public or by individuals of any or all parks, boulevards, and driveways, and may prescribe fines and penalties for violations. All fines are to be paid into the treasury of the park district.
4. To employ such engineers, clerks, and other employees, including a police force, as may be required; and to define and prescribe their respective duties and compensation. The park commissioners and all police officers appointed by them are conservators of the peace within and upon the parks, boulevards, driveways, and property controlled by the park district, and have power to make arrests on view of the offense, or upon warrants for violation of any of the penal ordinances of the park district, or for any breach of the peace, in the same manner as the police officers in cities.

*POWERS OF PARK DISTRICT.* — The park district is empowered —

1. To acquire, lay out, establish, construct, and maintain parks and boulevards; and to control, manage, and govern the same and the use thereof.
2. To construct, equip, and maintain field houses, gymnasiums, assembly rooms, comfort stations, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, wading pools, bathing beaches, bathhouses, locker rooms, boating basins, boathouses, lagoons, skating rinks, piers, conservatories for the propagation of flowers, shrubs, and other plants, animal and bird houses and enclosures, athletic fields with seating stands, golf, tennis, and other courses, courts, and grounds; to make and enforce reasonable rules, regulations, and charges therefor; and to provide any other athletic and recreational facilities and equipment which may be appropriate.



3. To acquire by gift, grant, or purchase, or by eminent domain, any and all real estate, lands, riparian estates, or rights, and all other properties required or needed for any park, boulevard, or driveway, or for extending, adorning, or maintaining the same, whether such land be located within or without the district, if such land is deemed necessary for park purposes, or for boulevards or driveways: *Provided*, That land or other property outside the district may not be acquired by condemnation. The park commissioners have the same control of and power over lands acquired without the district as over parks, boulevards, and driveways within the district.
4. Where property has been acquired by gift or devise and at the time of acquisition has cottages or sites for cottages under lease or rental to individuals, the district may rent or lease such cottages or sites for periods of not more than 5 years (all rentals to be paid into the treasury of the district).
5. To acquire by lease or permit from any other municipal corporation the right to occupy and use real estate, land, and riparian estates for other playground purposes; to improve, maintain, and equip the same, and to place permanent buildings and structures thereon (*ibid*).
6. To sprinkle streets lying within its territory, and to take charge of and maintain the parkways upon such streets when the question as to whether it shall exercise such power has been submitted to the voters upon petition of 50 owners residing in the district and favored by a majority vote.
7. To acquire by gift, grant, or purchase real estate and lands for use as a site for an armory; and to convey, sell, donate, lease, or rent real estate or lands acquired or owned to the State or to any proper agency thereof for use as a site for an armory, but without power to divert any gift, grant, or devise from the specific purpose designated by the donor (*ibid.*, as amended by Laws of 1937, p. 949).

**APPROPRIATION BILL.** — The board of commissioners of each park district must annually pass an ordinance, termed the annual appropriation bill, in which it may appropriate such sum or sums of money as may be deemed necessary to defray all necessary expenses and liabilities. No further appropriations may be made at any other time within such fiscal year unless the proposition has first been sanctioned by a majority of the voters, either by a petition signed by them, or at a general or special election.

**TAX LEVY.** — Any park district may levy and collect a general tax on the property in the district for necessary expenses, for the construction and maintenance of the parks, boulevards, and other improvements, and for the acquisition and improvement of lands authorized to be purchased or acquired. The tax is to be levied upon all property subject to taxation within the district as the same is assessed and equalized for State and county purposes. In order to determine the amount to be levied upon the property in that part of the district lying in each county, the board must inquire of the county clerks the last ascertained equalized value of the taxable property of the district lying in their respective counties, ascertain the rate percent required, and apportion the whole amount to be raised among the several parts of the district so lying in the different counties accordingly. The aggregate amount of taxes levied for any one year, exclusive of the amount levied for the payment of bonded indebtedness or interest thereon, may not exceed 1½ mills on each dollar of taxable property in the district on the aggregate valuation as equalized for State and county taxes for the preceding year, unless a petition signed by not less than 2 percent of the voters of the district, asking that the authorized tax levy be increased to not more than 2 mills on each dollar, is presented to the board of commissioners and such increase is approved by the voters of the district at an election held on the question.

**ENLARGING PARK SYSTEM; BONDS; TAX LEVY; GENERAL.** — The commissioners of a park district who may desire to alter or enlarge the park system under their control by acquiring additional lands within the district, the property of which is taxable for the maintenance of the parks under their control, may acquire and improve such lots, blocks, and parcels of land as may, in their judgment, be necessary for the purpose of enlarging any park or parks and for the purpose of creating additional parks. In case the park commissioners cannot agree with the owners of such lands, they may condemn the same. The park commissioners may vacate and close any highways, streets, or alleys which may pass through, divide, or separate any lots, blocks, or lands so acquired, provided the consent of the municipal authorities is first obtained. The park commissioners may from time to time issue and sell, in addition to the bonds then authorized by law, bonds for the purpose of obtaining such funds as may be necessary for acquiring and improving such parks, except that no bonds may be issued contrary to the provisions of the State constitution, and provided the proposition of issuing the bonds is submitted to the voters and approved by a majority vote. The park commissioners may collect direct annual tax upon the property within their jurisdiction sufficient to pay the bond interest and principal (*ibid*).

**SAME; PARK DISTRICTS IN CERTAIN CITIES; RATIO OF POPULATION TO ACRES OF PARKS.** — In any park district located in cities having a population in excess of 100,000 where the number of inhabitants of the park district exceeds the ratio of 500 inhabitants of the district to each 1 acre of parks, the park commissioners may acquire by purchase, gift, condemnation, or otherwise any parcel or parcels of land lying within the district or territory under their control for the purpose of increasing the existing park areas or of creating additional parks and pleasure grounds. Lands and territory for additional parks may be acquired from time to time until the ratio of the number of inhabitants as shown by the last census does not exceed more than 500 inhabitants to each 1 acre of public parks. Highways, streets, avenues, or alleys passing through, dividing or separating any land so selected or appropriated may be vacated or closed with the consent of the municipal authorities. Bonds may be sold to an amount required for the purpose of acquiring the lands, except that no bonds may be issued contrary to the provisions of the State constitution, and provided that no bonds in excess of \$100,000 may be issued during any 1 year without being first submitted to and approved by a majority vote of the voters. A direct annual tax may be levied and collected sufficient to pay the bond interest and principal.

**LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS; SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS.** — When any improvement is local in character and confined within the limits of the park district, the same may be made by special assessment when the board deems it available to do so. All moneys collected by virtue of special assessments must be expended only for the improvement aforesaid in the portion of the district situated in the township in which the same is levied. The term "improvement" includes the condemnation of property for park and boulevard purposes.

**BONDS; ELECTION.** — For the payment of land condemned or purchased for parks or boulevards; for the building, maintaining, improving, and protecting of the same; and for the payment of expenses incident thereto, or for the acquisition of real estate and lands to be used as a site for an armory, the park district may issue bonds and pledge its property and credit therefor to an amount, including existing indebtedness, so that the aggregate indebtedness of the park district does not exceed 3 percent of the value of the taxable property therein, to be ascertained by the last assessment for State and county taxes previous to the issue of the bonds, unless a petition, signed by not less than 2 percent of the voters of the district, asking that the authorized aggregate indebtedness of the park district be increased to not more than 5 percent of the value of the taxable property therein, is presented to the board of commissioners and such increase is approved by the voters of the district at an election held on the question. If a majority of the votes cast upon the proposition is in the affirmative, the increase is to be deemed approved. Bonds (other than bonds to refund any maturing bond issues, and bonds to fund or refund any judgment indebtedness, including any unpaid public benefits and amounts assessed against any park district) may not be issued by any park district of less than 45,000 population until the proposition has been submitted to and approved by a majority of the voters voting upon the proposition. For the purpose of providing for the payment of interest on such bonds, and also a sum sufficient to pay the principal thereof at maturity, the park district and its corporate authorities are required to levy an additional annual tax sufficient to provide for such principal and interest. Refunding bonds for the purpose of refunding principal of outstanding bonds may be issued whenever proceeds of taxes levied therefor have not been received in time to pay such principal at its maturity (*ibid.*, as amended by Laws of 1937, p. 94; Laws of 1939, p. 813).

**TAKING OVER PUBLIC STREETS.** — Any public street, road, or highway or portion thereof situated within the limits of any park district may be taken charge of and improved and maintained as a pleasure drive or boulevard, with the consent of the corporate authorities having control of same, and also the consent of the owners of the majority of the frontage abutting thereon (*ibid.*).

**TURNING OVER CITY PARKS AND BOULEVARDS.** — Any parks or boulevards in any municipality, or any parks owned by or under the control of any municipality which are within 4 miles of its corporate limits, and within the limits of any park district, may, with the consent of the municipality, be turned over to and placed under the control of the commissioners of the park district. In any park district any and all lands fronting on a lake and belonging to or under the control of any city, town, or village in the park district, with the riparian rights attaching thereto, are appropriated for such parks or boulevards as are authorized to be made and established, with the consent of the corporate authorities of the municipality (*ibid.*).

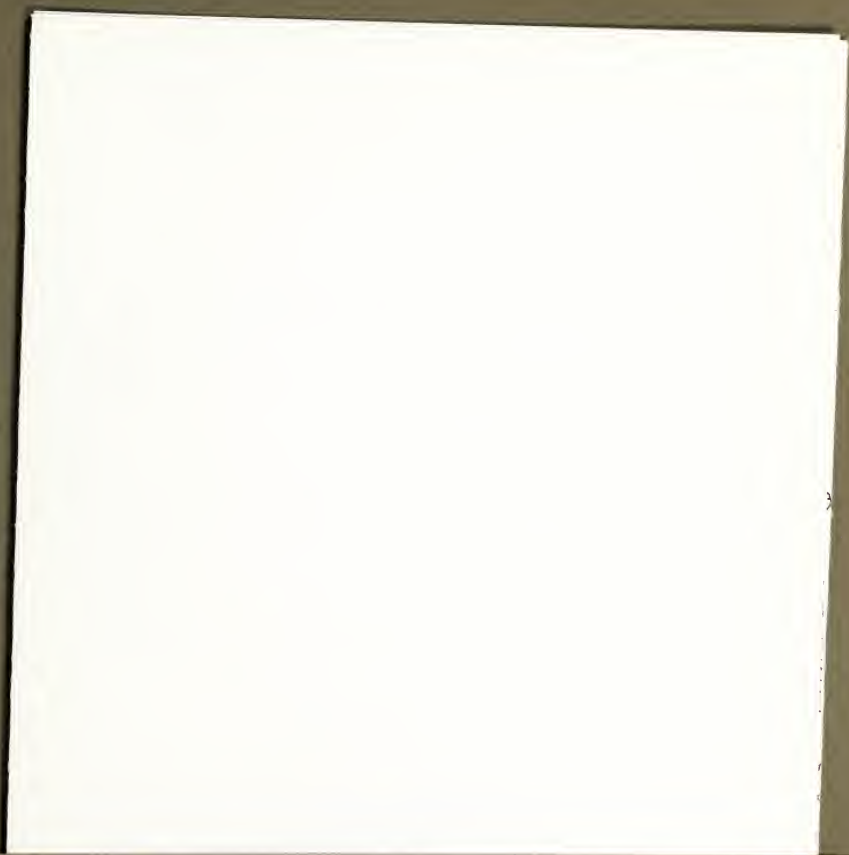
**ANNEXATION OF TERRITORY.** — Territory adjoining and in the same county with any park district may be annexed to and become a part of the district. Any 100 voters residing within the territory proposed to be annexed may petition the county judge of the county, wherein land proposed to be annexed lies, to cause to be submitted to the voters of the park district and of the territory proposed to be annexed the question whether

such territory be annexed to and become a part of the adjoining park district. If the voters residing within the territory proposed to be annexed are fewer than 100 in number, a majority of such voters, together with a majority of the owners of lands within the territory proposed to be annexed, and who represent a major portion in area of land within such territory, may petition in like manner as above-provided. Upon the filing of the petition, an election must be held in the territory proposed to be annexed and also in the park district. If a majority of the votes cast at such elections favor annexation, then the adjoining territory becomes part of the district (ibid).

*SALE OF PARK DISTRICT LANDS.* — Any park district owning and holding any real estate which is not needed or useful for park purposes may sell not to exceed a total of 15 acres of such property. The board must adopt and publish a resolution describing the property. No property may be sold under any circumstances unless the sale is approved by a majority of the voters of the park district voting on the question. Before any election is called for the purpose of submitting the question of sale, a petition signed by not less than 100 voters of the district must be filed requesting the submission of the question of the sale to the voters. If a majority of the voters voting on the question favor the sale, the board must sell the property at public auction after giving notice of the sale by publication. The property must be sold to the highest responsible bidder (Laws of 1937, p. 980).

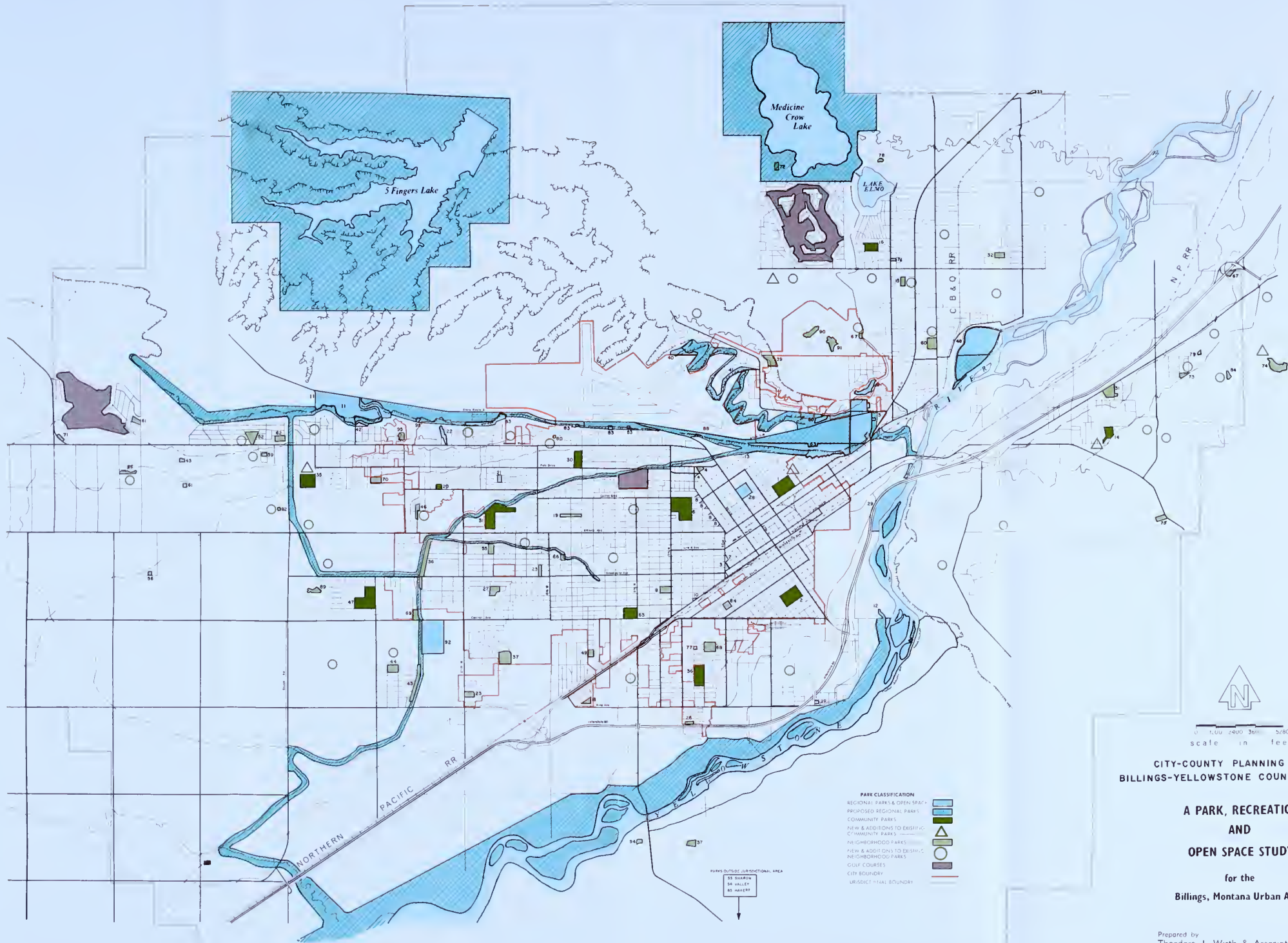
*SALE OR LEASE OF PARK PROPERTY.* — Any board of park commissioners may by ordinance or resolution approved by the affirmative vote of three-fourths of its elected members authorize the sale or lease of any real property conveyed to it by gift, grant, or devise if no specific purpose or use has been made a condition by the donor, and the property is not suitable for or adapted to park purposes or for boulevards and driveways in connection with any park, and if the property is not contiguous to any park maintained by a park district. The sale or lease may be only at public auction upon competitive bidding after notice has been given by publication (Law of 1939, p. 818).











CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
BILLINGS-YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA

# A PARK, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE STUDY

for the  
Billings, Montana Urban Area

Prepared by  
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